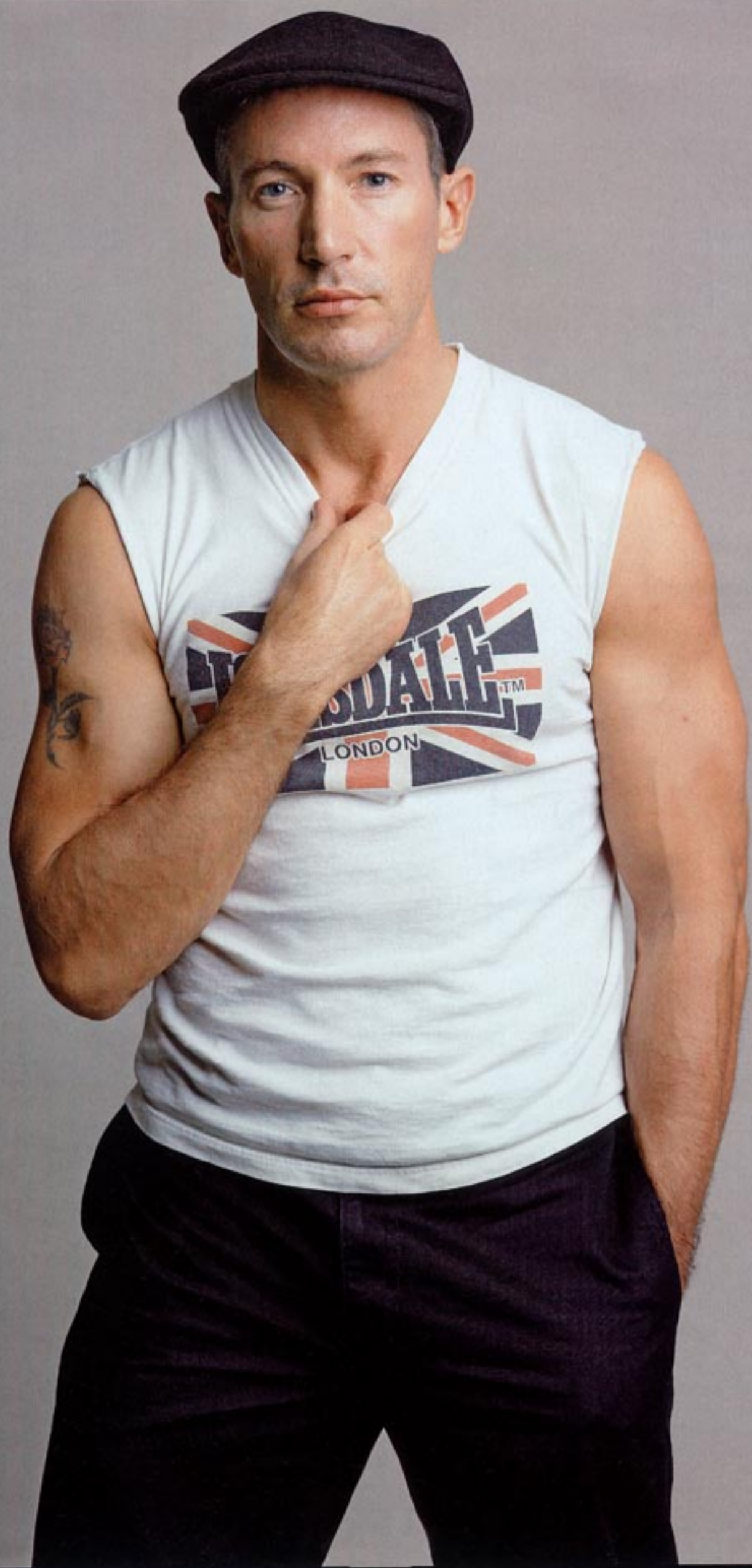


AIDEN SHAW

His credits include *Roll in the Hay*, *Grease Guns*, two novels, and three books of poetry. The “Brit with the big dick” is the thinking man’s porn idol.

**INTERVIEW AND PORTRAIT BY
TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS**



Timothy Greenfield-Sanders talks with the inimitable Aiden Shaw, one of thirty porn stars he photographed for his just-released book, *XXX*.

[Timothy took a break from editing his new HBO film, *Thinking XXX*, to chat with Aiden.]

TIMOTHY: When you're shooting a porn scene, is the sex as great as it looks?

AIDEN: I don't consider what I do on film to be sex. It's acting — though, as far as acting goes, I don't think it's any great shakes. When you're filming you're thinking about the lighting, the composition, or twisting your body to make it look right for the camera. Sex is intimate and passionate — when I'm having sex with somebody, my lips never leave his. On a porn shoot, it needs to look real from the camera's point of view.

TIMOTHY: Porn star Nina Hartley talks about that in my film, *Thinking XXX*. She says people don't realize that you shoot for four minutes, and then stop for stills or to change the lights.

AIDEN: I slept with this guy once, and he wanted to have sex several times in a row. I had to tell him that that only happens in my films. It's not real.

TIMOTHY: It's completely choreographed to look spontaneous.

AIDEN: In a sense I feel removed during shooting, like a spectator who just happens to be involved. Sometimes when I'm in the middle of a take, I'll think, "Look at you. You're desirable and sexy? How funny." I used to be a punky, effeminate kid, but now thousands of gay men all over the world think I'm a male icon. It's hilarious. I still see the kid I used to be when I look in the mirror. I still have the same doubts and fears.

TIMOTHY: Do you ever get caught up in your own hype?

AIDEN: No. You can't feel thousands of people all over the world watching you on the screen. But you can feel someone loving you. That gets inside you. Love is real — it's almost physiological.

TIMOTHY: How did you get into porn?

AIDEN: In the '80s, I used to go to this London drag club called Kinky Gerlinky — it was quite fabulous for a while. I met Leigh Bowery there one night when I went dressed as Minnie Mouse. Then I met someone who invited me to LA to meet the porn director Chi Chi LaRue. I dropped my whole life in London and went off to California. Chi Chi and I hit it off — she was teaching me how

to strip, I got a hard-on, and it all started from there.

TIMOTHY: Chi Chi LaRue gave lots of people their starts. How old were you when you began?

AIDEN: In my early twenties. While I was shooting my first films with Chi Chi, all the other porn producers and big shots came in to watch me work, people like Chuck Holmes from Falcon Studios. All of a sudden everyone wanted to work with me.

TIMOTHY: What had you been doing before you left England?

AIDEN: I went to art college in Manchester, where I studied dance and theater — that was my early training. Eventually, I started working in both TV and film, art directing and directing music videos.

TIMOTHY: Your background must have come in handy for porn.

AIDEN: Having worked as both an actor and director, I can appreciate what a director needs from me. I know how to cheat towards the camera, how to react for a close-up of my face, how not to cast a shadow over my dick — all the important stuff. When people tell me I'm very photogenic, I say, "I've learned to be photogenic."

TIMOTHY: You're an iconic porn star, and you're also an accomplished novelist and poet. Your first novel, *Brutal*, came out in 1993 — it captured the London club scene of the mid-'80s.

AIDEN: I want my books to show that it's okay to do drugs, have sex, and have a wild lifestyle. You can still find love and cultivate profound friendships.

TIMOTHY: Are you writing now?

AIDEN: My new book is an autobiographical account of the past seven years. It's called *My Undoing*, and draws from the diary I've kept over the years. It includes the period when I was temporarily paralyzed after being hit by a car in Brussels in 1998. It also has me falling in love. When I read it I think, "Oh my God! This is your life?"

TIMOTHY: Do you consider yourself a writer first and foremost?

AIDEN: I describe myself as an artist. Sometimes, I want the isolation of writing, and other times, I want to do porn because it feels so kooky.

TIMOTHY: In what way?

AIDEN: I come from a proper Catholic family, so the very idea that I do porn still feels kooky. I was such a good boy — I used to go



Mark Mahaney

to church several times a week. Everything I've done has been a response to my upbringing. I couldn't blindly accept that so many things are sinful - I had to investigate, to see for myself.

TIMOTHY: So you're still investigating after fifteen years.

AIDEN: Well, now I do it mainly for self-promotion. [laughs] I also like to let people know that I'm not just becoming a middle-aged writer. I'm still trash, and I'm proud of it.

TIMOTHY: Are you afraid of growing old in such a youth-obsessed industry?

AIDEN: I believe you can grow old and still be desirable. I came of age during a time when hitting forty meant you'd survived the AIDS epidemic. I want to celebrate that.

TIMOTHY: You're HIV positive. How does that effect your porn shoots?

AIDEN: I thought it would be more complicated

than it's turned out to be. Before a shoot, the other actors are told that I'm positive and asked if they want to work with me. It's worth pointing out that on professional porn sets, you only have very protected sex. It never gets out of hand.

TIMOTHY: Looking back on your porn career, which films mean the most to you?

AIDEN: My favorite is *Roll in the Hay*, which is ancient now. I like how it looks. It's set on a farm, so there are bright blue skies, red tractors, and hay barns. But it was a nightmare to film. There were flies everywhere - they kept sticking to people's butts! [laughs] Another favorite is *Grease Guns* - I think that one looks cute because it's so clichéd. It takes place in a garage, with mechanics covered in grease. For me, the films that look the most dirty and porn-y are the funniest.